

# HelpMe Headlines

## AFL-CIO COMMUNITY SERVICES

1203 N. 6th St., St. Joseph, MO 64501

www.helpmenow.org



### Agency goals, outcomes

The agency's annual outcomes & 2026 goals

PAGES 2-4

### Diaper Depot grows quickly

Program expansion proves fruitful in 2025

PAGE 6

### Volunteering made simple

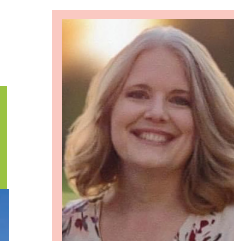
Online system to improve volunteer experience

PAGE 6

## Seeking stability in shaky times

While spring is often a season of new beginnings—of fresh starts, new projects, and renewed energy—it can be difficult to focus on what's ahead when so much feels uncertain.

Right now, many people are navigating a sense of unease about the future. Rising costs, shifting circumstances, and unknowns make it harder to plan, harder to feel secure, and, for many, harder to give. When you're unsure of what lies ahead, holding tightly to what you have can feel like the only safe choice. But if uncertainty is challenging for those of us who are relatively stable, we must remember it is even more difficult for those who already struggle. The families we serve every day are not just facing "what ifs"—they are facing immediate,



Nichi's Notes  
Nichi Seckinger,  
Executive Director

real needs: how to keep the lights on, how to afford diapers, how to survive another week. And yet, even in times like these, this community continues to show up. Time and again, we have seen that when things feel uncertain, people still find ways to help—whether it's through donations, volunteering, or simply sharing resources and information with someone in need. That generosity is what allows us to continue our work and ensures the most vulnerable among us are not facing these challenges alone.

Giving doesn't always come from a place of abundance. Often, it comes from understanding—recognizing that at any point, any of us could find ourselves in need of that same support. The strength of a community is not measured by how it responds in easy times, but by how it cares for one another when things are difficult.

As we move through this season, we remain committed to being here—for those who need help today, and for those who may need it tomorrow. And when we reach out to ask for support, it is because we are seeing that need grow in real time. It is because more folks are turning to us for help, and we cannot meet that need without the continued support of this community. We are grateful to be part of a community that continues to care for one another—especially when it matters most.

## SFC: ready to step into '26 school year

Each year, AFL-CIO Community Services looks forward to hosting Soles for Christ, a program that helps ensure local children have a new pair of shoes as they head back to school.

This year's distribution will take place **Monday, Aug. 10, and Tuesday, Aug. 11**, from 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. both days, at the St. Joseph Scottish Rite Building, 515 N. 6th St.

The program serves children from Pre-K (age 4 and older) through 12th grade living in Andrew, Buchanan, DeKalb, and Clinton counties in Missouri, as well as Doniphan County, Kansas. Shoes are distributed on a first-come, first-served basis, and children must be present to receive a pair. A full list of program requirements is available at helpmenow.org and on the Soles for Christ Facebook page.

For many families, a new pair of shoes is more than just a back-to-school item — it's a step toward confidence, comfort, and a strong

start to the year ahead. Thanks to the continued generosity of this community, Soles for Christ is able to meet that need year after year.

There are many ways to get involved. Donations of new tennis shoes, monetary gifts, and volunteer support all help make this program possible. New shoes can be dropped off at the agency, 1203 N. 6th St., through Friday, July 31, between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m., Monday through Friday. Monetary donations are also welcome and are tax deductible.

Volunteers play a key role by helping fit children with shoes, organizing inventory, and assisting with family registration during the event. If you're interested in volunteering or would like to make a donation by phone, please contact our office at 816.364.1131. Donations can also be made by mail or online at helpmenow.org.

With the help of the community, Soles for Christ continues to ensure that every child has the opportunity to walk into the school year with comfort, confidence, and dignity.

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AFL-CIO Community Services  
1203 N. Sixth St.  
Saint Joseph, MO 64501

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AFL-CIO Community Services and United Way Partnership

## AFL-CIO COMMUNITY SERVICES

SPRING 2026



### GIVE GIFTS

The opportunities and options for giving are numerous for donors interested in contributing items, and every donation is put to good use. Diapers and wipes are always needed for the Diaper Depot; used eyeglasses can be donated to the Lions Club Eyeglasses Program; and new shoes are collected for the Soles for Christ program. To donate, please call 816.364.1131.

### GIVE FUNDS

The success of all agency programs is made possible through the generosity of community members and businesses that provide financial support. By making an unrestricted monetary donation or becoming a business or corporate event sponsor, you allow us to respond to the most current program needs. Because many programs are seasonal, monetary gifts help ensure continued success without limiting funds to a specific time of year. To donate, visit helpmenow.org or call 816.364.1131.



### GIVE YOUR TIME

Volunteer opportunities are always available, and we can find a place that matches your talents and interests. To give your time, please visit helpmenow.org or call 816.364.1131.

## Diaper Depot meeting a growing need

Diaper Depot enrollment has grown rapidly over the past year, with more than 700 children now enrolled in the program. While some children have aged out or moved outside the service area, nearly 400 remain active each month.

In 2025, following the closing of the agency's thrift store program, Diaper Depot expanded into part of the former retail space to better accommodate the more than 15,000 diapers delivered to the agency each month.

Families can currently pick up diapers on Tuesdays from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. and Wednesdays from 1 p.m. to 5 p.m. each month. As the program continues to grow, the agency is exploring expanded pickup times to better serve participating families.

"We are so pleased with the program's growth," said Executive Director Nichi Seckinger. "We knew there was a need for this supplemental program, but we underestimated just how many children would benefit."



## Volunteer sign-ups move online

AFL-CIO Community Services supports a wide range of community needs, and volunteers play a vital role in that mission. Whether you have a few hours to give or are looking for a more ongoing commitment, there's a place for you to help. We're excited to share a simple new way for volunteers to stay connected and continue making an impact.

Through iVolunteer, you can browse opportunities, choose activities that fit your schedule, register for shifts, and get connected quickly — making it easier than ever to stay involved in the work you care about. Whether you're a familiar face at distributions or have helped behind the scenes at special events, this platform helps you stay



engaged and informed. iVolunteer also sends reminders and updates, so it's easy to keep track of your commitments. To get started, visit afl-ciocommunityservices.ivolunteer.com or scan the QR code.

The agency also has several key seasonal programs to keep on your radar. Volunteers are needed for Soles for Christ on August 7 and 10-12, helping ensure local students have new sneakers for the school year. Looking ahead, our Adopt-A-Family Christmas program will need volunteers beginning in December, offering many ways to support families during the holiday season. The agency also welcomes regular volunteers for the Diaper Depot program, including weekly distribution days on Tuesdays and Wednesdays, as well as monthly delivery days.

To our current volunteers, thank you for the time, energy, and compassion you continue to give. Your commitment makes this work possible, and we are grateful to have you as part of our ongoing effort to serve the St. Joseph community.

For additional information about volunteering or the ivolunteer platform, please contact ashley.luthans@helpmenow.org.





- ❖ Callers are provided resources for basic needs including food, shelter, healthcare, mental health, employment, education and seasonal assistance (tax preparation, school supplies, heating/cooling centers).
- ❖ Callers reach a trained, caring Call Specialist who assesses the needs of each person and searches a database with more than 14,000 services to connect callers with the help they need.
- ❖ In 2025, the agency had 24,736 contacts, made 7,436 referrals, and advocated on behalf of 2,359 clients.
- ❖ Anyone can now search the agency's database through Help Me Online by visiting [www.helpmenow.org](http://www.helpmenow.org).

It's free.  
It's confidential.  
It's available 24 hours  
a day, 365 days a year.

**24,736**  
unduplicated contacts

**\$6,667**  
in funding provided  
assistance for **137**  
individuals

- ❖ The four most common funding needs of 2025 were: gasoline/automotive/transportation, water bills, sewer bills, and electric bills.
- ❖ There are no boundaries, no eligibility guidelines, and no fees for this service.
- ❖ The agency uses emergency funds for the people that "fall through the cracks" like car payments, insurance, and repairs, phone bills, medical needs, and other necessities required to exist. The agency tries to fill those gaps.

## Emergency Assistance Fund

- ❖ Of the 913 families that applied during the 2025 program, 348 households had \$0 income.
- ❖ The majority, 80 percent (729 families), are at 100 percent or below poverty guidelines; 17 percent (157 families) are up to 35 percent above poverty guidelines; and 2 percent (23 families) are 36 percent or more above poverty guidelines.
- ❖ In 2025, 688 different adopters provided assistance to the families. This included, 250 individuals, families, businesses, and organizations. There were 438 undesignated monetary donations made to the program to help cover the cost of food baskets, gift cards, and vouchers for families.



**2,743**  
individuals adopted

**1,005**  
adults  
**1,468**  
children  
**270**  
seniors

Over 100,000  
individuals served  
by Adopt-A-Family  
since 1983.



- ❖ Program provides children supplemental diapers and wipes, ointment, or powder every month.
- ❖ Last year, the Diaper Depot had 1,777 completed pickups of diapers and related hygiene items for 336 children enrolled in the program.
- ❖ A few years ago, the agency added adult incontinence supplies to the inventory. Many older adults on a fixed income struggle with this issue. The agency provided 613 units of adult incontinence supplies, at a total value of \$2,287.

**\$48,494** in diapers and hygiene items

**135,550**  
diapers provided



- ❖ In 2025, 39 individuals applied for glasses, with 24 receiving a pair.
- ❖ Throughout the program's history, nearly 2,825 people have applied for a pair of glasses critical for work, injury avoidance, and optic health.
- ❖ This program is a group effort: Family Guidance provides funding for eye exams; local optometrists provide the exams and fit clients for glasses; the three local Lions Clubs fund it as a group; and Community Services administers the program.

**\$1,380**  
value of glasses



- ❖ Children in PreK (age 4+) through 12th grade, living in Buchanan, Andrew, DeKalb, and Clinton counties in Missouri and Doniphan County in Kansas, are eligible to receive a free pair of new tennis shoes and socks.
- ❖ Every qualified child who comes to the distribution receives shoes. Shoes are purchased if the correct size is not readily available.
- ❖ The first year, 210 pairs of school shoes were distributed.

**1,119**  
students given shoes

**\$33,570**  
value

- ❖ In 2025, the program utilized 138 volunteers performing 668.5 hours of service.

- ❖ The Strike Out Cancer Fund assists area cancer patients with medication, transportation, lodging, bills, and other expenses related to hardship during cancer treatments.
- ❖ The fund helps with patients battling any type of cancer.
- ❖ In 2025, 33 households received funds. Types of assistance covered were rent / housing, energy bills, and sewer and water bills.

**\$18,206**  
value



**\$4,740**  
in funding provided  
assistance for **465**  
individuals

- ❖ Program provides space heaters to those in need during the cold weather months, and fans and air conditioners during the summer.
- ❖ Items are donated by Evergy, the United Way, local businesses, and others.
- ❖ In 2025, 31 heaters and 143 fans were given to 174 households, which included 465 individuals.



In 2025,  
**2,131**  
hours toward agency  
programs

**\$74,138**  
value



**1** GOAL: Continue growth of Diaper Depot program to provide consistent monthly diaper and hygiene support to families in need.

TARGET: Serve 700 children, with at least 50% receiving monthly supplies.

VALUE: Approx. \$25 per child per month

FUNDS NEEDED: \$15,000

**2** GOAL: Raise capital funds to complete priority exterior improvements to agency's 25-year-old building.

TARGET: Repair siding, replace windows, doors, and dilapidated storage shed.

VALUE: Approx. \$75,000

FUNDS NEEDED: \$75,000

**3** GOAL: Expand access to Soles for Christ and Diaper Depot programs into additional counties.

TARGET: Serve 300 children across regional service area.

VALUE: Approx. \$30 per child

FUNDS NEEDED: \$9,000

**4** GOAL: Secure program sponsorships to support core agency programs and ensure long-term sustainability.

TARGET: 6-8 individual program sponsors

VALUE: \$5,000 - \$10,000 per sponsorship

FUNDS NEEDED: \$60,000-\$80,000